

Ten Suggestions for Adding Person-Centered Features in Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

These are recommendations or suggestions of good practices that are not required. These can be helpful to increase both student and family engagement in the IEP planning process. For more information, [watch the video, “Five Things to Know about Charting the Life Course \(CTLC\) in the Classroom” from the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities on YouTube.](#)

A good IEP meeting is person-centered

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) does not require an IEP to be person-centered, but your team can use person-centered features for best IEP practices. An IEP can be person-centered as it is a written statement of services and collaboration for specialized instruction and programs for a student with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in a meeting. [The federal definition of an IEP is available on the Government Publication Office website.](#)

Ten easy suggestions to make an IEP more person-centered

The following steps can assist you in making IEPs more person-centered:

Pre-planning

1. Ask the family about services being used in home, community or employment

Purpose: For student/family to express what he or she desires and to better collect data on interagency services to help support those goals that are culturally relevant and important to the student and his or her family.

Suggested Timeframe: As soon as you are aware of student eligibility, a new student on your caseload, or at the beginning of school year.

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Ask family and student, then service providers, if they are interested in focusing on an IEP that supports goals important across school, home, community and/or employment, by participating in an interagency person-centered process.

- Assure that consent to speak with service providers and to share information is obtained.

- If service providers are interested, find out more about using the Special Education Evaluation Status code MARSS6 for students that are receiving special education services from the school district and services from at least one other public agency identified on a written plan through a coordinated planning process. View [Minnesota Statutes, sections 125.A.023](#) and [125A.027](#).

☐ Ask IEP team members to begin thinking about what is important to and what is important for the student/family. You can use forms like the ones below to record information:

- [Sample student IEP input form \(available from Minnesota Department of Education \(MDE\) website\)](#).
- [Sample parent input form \(available from MDE website\)](#).
- [Sample Trajectory for Exploring form from Charting the LifeCourse Nexus](#).

2. Coordinate a date for the annual IEP meeting.

Purpose: To ensure participation of all stakeholders.

Suggested Timeframe: at least a month before the due date.

☐ Invite and encourage all IEP team members/service providers to attend and check with student/family to see if anyone else (e.g., friends or relatives that know the student's preferences and strengths) needs to be added.

☐ Solicit input for the meeting agenda from each IEP team member.

- [Send agenda email sample \(available on MDE website\)](#) to all team members and ask for specific input related to individual agenda items. Include student/family as a CC on the e-mail.

3. Provide the assessment, evaluation and/or present levels with the family prior to the IEP meeting

Purpose: Give student/family an opportunity to review and discuss assessment results to determine any new strengths or needs that have been identified that are important for the student/family. This allows the IEP planning to focus primarily on needs that are important to the student/family.

Suggested Timeframe: at least a week before the scheduled IEP meeting.

☐ Student/family has the opportunity to prepare for and contribute to the IEP development.

4. Create and disseminate an IEP meeting agenda

Purpose: Align the agenda with preferences, strengths, needs and goals of the student/family.

Suggested Timeframe: at least a week before the scheduled IEP meeting.

- ☐ Include date, time, location, instructions for finding meeting room, agenda, etc. [Use the sample meeting agenda handout](#). You can [use the sample IEP agenda script \(both available on MDE website\)](#).

During the meeting

5. IEP team member introduction

Purpose: To identify members of the team that can support the student/family's hopes and dreams.

Suggested Timeframe: at the start of the meeting.

- ☐ Provide a meeting sign-in sheet.
- ☐ Have participants state their name and their role in the IEP meeting.
- ☐ Ask participants that know student well to share what they like and/or admire about the student, and a moment in the past year when they had fun together.
- ☐ Identify facilitator, timekeeper, note taker and person responsible for follow-up and coordination [using an agreed-upon document, like the Student Summary Form \(available on the MDE website\)](#).

6. Follow meeting agenda

Purpose: To keep everyone on track, and ensure that the student/family have the opportunity to comment and provide input about what is important to them.

Suggested Timeframe: during the meeting.

- ☐ [Use the agenda \(available on MDE website\)](#) to facilitate the meeting.

7. Plan goals that reflect the desires expressed by student and/or family (for younger children)

Purpose: Ownership and personal interest from the student/family to increase the possibility of positive outcomes that are both important to and important for him or her, or his or her family.

Suggested Timeframe: During the meeting.

- ☐ Have the student and family share their strengths, visions, priorities (use the family/individual input forms and or the information from their trajectory).
- ☐ Plan goals that reflect student/family's long-term goals.

- ☐ Be sure that student/family input is visible in the IEP created.

8. Create document summarizing goals and follow-up actions

Purpose: Identifies who is responsible for key activities and supports that were agreed upon by the student, family and his or her team, and prevents misunderstandings, areas where there is not enough support, and areas where there are the potential for duplicative or contradicting efforts.

Suggested Timeframe: During the meeting, or within one week after the IEP meeting.

- ☐ Summarize goals and follow-up steps, attach to agency-specific plans and send to participants.
 - [Sample Student meeting summary form \(available on MDE website\)](#).

After the meeting

9. Send IEP meeting evaluation

Purpose: Gives input for how to improve future IEP meetings, and address any areas that need a follow-up.

Suggested Timeframe: Within one - three days after the IEP meeting (ideally, immediately after the IEP meeting).

- ☐ Send all participants the link or paper copies of meeting evaluation.

10. Continue to coordinate

Purpose: Will ensure that things are happening according to the plan.

Suggested Timeframe: Two times or more during the IEP plan year.

- ☐ Continue communicating across agencies to follow up on IEP meeting summary. You can refer back to the [sample Student Summary Form from the meeting \(available on MDE website\)](#).